1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

he wears only the lower part, which covers him below the waist like a skirt. The Founder is reverenced more than the other ancestors. But sometimes the Founder[1] is outshone in importance by one of his descendants who was a famous fighter, or a commander of the Rāja's armies, or one of the Rāja's ministers, or a famous magician, or was noted for his piety. The Founder has a start over the other ancestors, but this start does not prevail against a very powerful descendant. Thus a Coorg carries the social importance which he achieves for himself into the world of his ancestors.

People who die on the battlefield, or who die a violent death, become *biras*, and *biras* are regarded as more powerful than other ancestors. The Karavanḍa, Biddanḍa, and Kaliyāṭanḍa *okkas* have separate shrines for *bīras* called *bira kōṭé*.[2]

A man who is killed by a tiger or panther becomes a 'tiger spirit' (*nari pūda*), and at the ancestor-propitiation the Baṇṇa oracle paints his face yellow and marks it with black stripes or spots just before he is possessed by the 'tiger spirit'.

The wife of an ancestor is called a *kāraṇachchi* or *sōḍalachchi* or *toḍapijji*. It is believed that ancestresses are particularly liable to possess children, another instance of the Coorg belief in the strength of the bond which binds a mother to her children.

Every ancestral house has some place for the worship of the ancestors of the *okka*. This might be a separate shrine called *kaimaḍa*, or a low, earthen platform (*kāraṇava taré*) built round the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. The *kaimaḍa* is a single-room shrine usually facing east, the sacred direction. When an ancestor-propitiation (*kāraṇava téré*) is performed, wooden figurines representing each of the ancestors, or crude figures embossed on sheets of copper or silver, or gold, or even slabs of stone with figures sculptured on it, are kept before a lamp lighted in the ancestor-shrine. The Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform an ancestor-propitiation whenever an elder dies, and on this occasion they have wooden

[1] The Founder is usually a man, but in certain exceptional cases the honour may fall on a woman. In a certain *okka* in Nālknāḍ the men were all slaughtered in a fight over 160 years ago, and the only survivor was a pregnant woman who fled to the shrine of Pāyūrappa in Malabar. This lady gave birth to a son and returned later to her conjugal *okka* in Nālknāḍ. She is regarded as the Founder of this *okka*, and is propitiated annually at the end of the harvest festival.

[2] *Bira* is a corruption of the Sanskrit *vīra*, which means a 'hero'. In the Kannaḍa country memorial stones called *Iragallu* were formerly erected for heroes dying in battle.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

representations of ancestors made which they deposit in the river Kāvēri at the end of the propitiation. Sometimes personal possessions of the ancestors such as walking-sticks or the small Coorg sword called *pīché katti* are kept in the shrine during the ancestor-propitiation.

Ordinarily the ancestor-shrine does not contain sculptured images, or unhewn stones, representing the ancestors of the *okka*. But during an ancestor-propitiation wooden or other figurines representing ancestors might be kept in the ancestor-shrine. In those parts of Coorg where there are no ancestor-shrines, every house has an earthen platform built round the trunk of a milk-exuding tree, and a rough, unhewn stone embedded in the platform stands for all the ancestors of the *okka* collectively. An unhewn stone embedded in an earthen platform might also stand for a deity like Pūda, Guḷika, Kētrappa, and Nāta (cobra-deity).[1]

Some Coorgs consider that the ancestor-shrine or platform is built over the grave of the Founder of the *okka*, and that the cobra-platform is built at a spot where a cobra breathed its last. There is no evidence to support either of these views.

Ancestor-platforms are the rule in Kiggaṭnāḍ in south-east Coorg. It has been mentioned that Kiggaṭnāḍ has a great deal in common with Kannaḍa culture, and contrasts with Nālknāḍ and Kaḍiyetnāḍ in the south-west which are influenced by Malabar. The Baṇṇas and Paṇikas, masters of the technique of ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, are both Malayāḷam-speaking castes and their influence normally does not penetrate as far east as Kiggaṭnāḍ. The elaborate propitiation of ancestors, with the Baṇṇas or Paṇikas acting as oracles of the dead ancestors, does not prevail in Kiggaṭnāḍ: in the latter area propitiation is restricted to the offer of meat and liquor.

Ancestor-shrines or *kaimaḍas* are found in Coorg to the south-west of Mercara, but they are far from universal. Moegling, writing in 1855, tells us that only 'seven of the Armēri [village near Vīrarājpēṭ] houses have regular little temples where *kōla* or *bhāraṇi* is performed'.[2] Even today several prosperous and well-

[1] All over south India village-deities like Māri are frequently represented by rough unhewn stones. The Coorg instance is only a part of a wider phenomenon spreading over south India, but there are other features which link up Coorg especially with Malabar and South Canara.

[2] *Coorg Memoirs*, p. 62.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

known *okkas* such as the Koḷandēra, Manḍepanḍa, Maneyapanḍa, and Koravanḍa have no ancestor-shrines.

Originally, odd stones embedded in earthen platforms built round the trunks of trees seem to have represented the ancestors everywhere in Coorg Proper, but later the ancestor-shrine seems to have replaced the earthen platforms in certain houses. The richer Coorgs then seem to have increasingly taken to such shrines: Moegling writes, 'those who cannot afford to build a *kaimaḍa* make a sort of mud bank for the purpose called *kōṭa* under a tree in the fields where the family's first house stood'.[1] It is likely that the possession or lack of an ancestor-shrine soon came to indicate, in certain areas, the economic and social position of an *okka*.

The next step in the elaboration of the *kaimaḍa*-complex was the building of special shrines for ancestors who died on the battle-field. Yet another step was taken when a sculptured image representing an ancestor or an ancestor's benefactor was placed in the ancestor-shrine. For instance, the chieftain Achchu Nāyaka was helped by the Kannaḍa ruler of Piriyāpaṭṇa, Nanjunḍa Arasu (*c.* 1670), to regain his chieftaincy. The grateful Achchu Nāyaka built a shrine in which sculptured images of himself and his benefactor were placed.

In the ancestral house of the Kōḍanḍa house in Kaḍanga Marūr village there are two tombs built over the graves of two ancestors who attained to very high positions in the service of the Rājas. These tombs have been built just outside the ancestor-shrine, and are crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, the 'vehicle' of Shiva. Tombs, and especially tombs crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, are very popular among the Lingāyaṭs of south India. Coorgs who were in the employment of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas borrowed the customs, manners, and ritual of their rulers.

During festivals like harvest festival, and at marriage, a little meat curry and rice are offered on a plantain leaf to the ancestors. A leaf-cup of arrack is also kept on the plantain leaf. The ancestors consume the essence of the offering and thereby consecrate it. All over Hindu India food, or any article which has been offered to a deity, is called *prasāda*, and worshippers have to partake of the *prasāda*. Food which is offered to a deity is later distributed among the worshippers, who eat it. Where flowers which have been placed

[1] Ibid., pp. 62–68. By 'family's first house' Moegling obviously means the ancestral house.

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

342 door leading into the inner hall which is lit by the skylight formed by the junction of the four slopes of the inner roof into an inner space (mittam) which is a masonry reservoir in which rain water is collected and drained off by an underground passage. The inner roof is supported on four pillars, [352] resting on thick board slabs of jackwood upon the walls of the reservoir, and forming convenient seats for the inmates of the house, the inner rooms of which are without windows and open by small doors into the central hall only. On the side diagonally opposite to the door of the verandah, and likewise on the inner right corner, there are two doors leading to the exterior of the house. The first room of the house is occupied by the master of the house and his wife. The next room is the kitchen-dining room whence the smoke issues and fills the hole house, coating and preserving the woodwork. The small rooms of the remaining two wings are [778] tenanted by the married couples, the widows and unmarried women. One room near the left corner is set apart as sacred to the family deity. From the ceiling are suspended match-locks, the wooden bells for cattle, the trappings of pack bullocks, and other domestic utensils. The space under the [353] roof and above the wooden ceiling, which is covered with a thick layer of [312] earth to keep the rooms below dry and fireproof, serves for storing bags of [343] rice, baskets, pots and culinary provisions. There is also a deep well built with stone in the compound to supply water for cooking purposes, and another hut by the side of the paddy fields for bathing in hot water.

352 The simplicity of the habits of the Coorgs is reflected in the furniture that they use. Wooden cots are generally used, with straw, coir, or cotton mattresses and cushions, sheets, and blankets; on the floor, they have coarse mats for rubbing their feet before going to bed. Occasionally they use wooden stools. A wooden shelf is fixed to the wall in each room to keep [415] their brass vessels, plates and lamps. Rattan or wooden boxes contain their [854] clothing and jewels. There is always a spittoon in one corner of the room. Where there is a baby, a rattan cradle is suspended from the ceiling within [777] reach of the mother's bed. Young Coorgs of the present day have better houses and good furniture as also comfortable arrangements in the European style.

Internal Structure

619 The Coorgs are composed of four endogamous groups, Amma, Sanna Malla and Boddu Coorgs. The Amma and Sanna Coorgs are found in all parts of Coorg. The Malla and Sanna Coorgs are united and are no longer distinguishable. They form the principal class of Coorgs.

Exogamy

614 The Coorg clans are too many to mention. Most of them are their local house names. Some are alien. Marriage within the clan is prohibited.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

by the junction of the four inner slopes of the roof, the dripping rain-water from which is collected in a masonry reservoir and drained off in an underground channel. On the side opposite to the verandah two doors communicate with the backyard of the house.

The front of the verandah is raised, and covered with a 2 feet broad wooden slab, so as to form a convenient seat; from it rise 3 or 4 wooden pillars, square and tapering and sometimes carved; the floor is of well beaten mud overlayed with cowdung; and the ceiling of wood arranged in small compartments. In some houses the verandah is separated from the inner hall merely by a wooden grating, in others by a solid earthwall with a sort of window, or lattice, made of wood. Like the principal door posts this aperture is often very handsomely carved in flowers and figures leaving small open spaces between, just enough to peep through without being seen, a contrivance chiefly for the benefit of the fair Kodagitis, who are as curious to see and observe visitors as their Mussulman sisters behind the Purdah or screen.

Entering through the principal door, the first compartment to the right is occupied by the master of the house and his wife. The next room is the kitchen from which the smoke issues and fills the whole house, coating and preserving the wood-work. While the European rubs his eyes and gasps for fresh air, the inmates of the house feel no inconvenience and only smile at his sensitiveness. The small compartments of the remaining two wings are tenanted by the married couples, and the unmarried women; the boys and young men sleep in the hall. From the ceiling are suspended matchlocks and rifles, the wooden bells and trappings for their pack-bullocks, and other domestic utensils, and the space under the roof, which is reached by a ladder, serves for storing bags, baskets, pads, pots, onions, salt, etc.

The house and yard are generally kept clean and orderly,